

## From the Chair: The Top 10 Myths About Imaging Informatics Certification (January 2008—SIIM News)

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The Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM) takes pride in the recently established certified imaging informatics professional (CIIP) process. The CIIP certification exam is administered by the American Board of Imaging Informatics (ABII), a non-profit organization founded by SIIM and the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT). The CIIP process has drawn attention to the issue of certification and has generated a great deal of welcome discussion and media attention. Although the vast majority of the information you may hear about the CIIP process is accurate, I would like to use this column to debunk a few of the myths I have seen in recent web posts and media coverage. Here are my top 10:

*Myth 1: It is challenging to qualify for the CIIP exam.*

The eligibility criteria for the CIIP exam were developed after an open and participatory process, including a public comment phase, to accommodate the varied career paths of imaging informatics professionals. A balance was struck between clinical and technical backgrounds, as well as between experience, formal education, and credentials. This balance makes it fair and straightforward for imaging informatics professionals to qualify for the CIIP exam. The final criteria are available on the ABII website ([https://www.abii.org/ABII/faces/abii\\_eligibility.jsp](https://www.abii.org/ABII/faces/abii_eligibility.jsp)).

*Myth 2: There are no clear learning objectives for the CIIP exam.*

A complete Test Content Outline (TCO) is available on the ABII website (<https://www.abii.org/>

[https://www.abii.org/ABII/faces/abii\\_test\\_content\\_outline.jsp](https://www.abii.org/ABII/faces/abii_test_content_outline.jsp)). The outline describes areas of knowledge identified by imaging informatics professionals as being critical to competent performance in the field and lists the relative weighting of each of 10 content areas. To supplement the TCO, the SIIM Education Advisory Network (EAN) is spearheading the development of a comprehensive model curriculum. The EAN, led by representatives of organizations that currently provide imaging informatics training, recently published educational learning objectives for each of the 10 content areas.

*Myth 3: The CIIP process focuses on organizational issues, project management, and operations.*

The CIIP TCO, which describes the knowledge necessary for competency, explicitly states that organizational issues, project management, and operations comprise only 20% of the exam. The remaining 80% of the exam focuses on image management (20%), information technology (15%), systems management (10%), clinical engineering (10%), medical informatics (10%), communications (10%), and training and education (5%).

*Myth 4: CIIP certification is one of several tracks toward certification.*

The CIIP exam is designed as a comprehensive test of the skills and knowledge necessary to be a competent imaging informatics professional. The

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areas tested by the certification exam are considered essential to competence, regardless of whether a career track emphasizes technological, organizational, or workflow issues.

*Myth 5: It was difficult to agree on the job requirements for a typical imaging informatics professional.*

The CIIP job requirements, and their relative emphasis in the certification exam, were based on a survey of working informatics professionals that determined the knowledge needed for competence in the field. Consensus was reached rapidly on these requirements and their relative importance.

*Myth 6: Some PACS education courses mirror the questions on the CIIP certification exam.*

The ABII does not endorse any course, vendor, or printed material. CIIP test questions are developed and reviewed by a group of experts, each of whom signs an agreement not to disclose test question information. Certification candidates sign a similar agreement. Therefore, the test questions are confidential, and no education course can claim to “teach to the test.” Of course, many courses do closely follow the TCO.

*Myth 7: The CIIP exam consists of a fixed set of questions.*

CIIP exam questions are proposed by a select group of imaging informatics experts and placed in a database, where they are pilot-tested and validated. For each certification exam, a variable subset of these questions is drawn from the database. All questions are validated through psychometric testing before they are used and are periodically retired and replaced by new ones. A similar test development method has been used for decades by the ARRT certification process.

*Myth 8: The ABII is not an independent organization.*

The ABII is an independent, non-profit organization whose sole mission is to enhance patient care, professionalism, and competence in imaging informatics. SIIM and ARRT each appoint three of ABII’s seven board members. The seventh board member is a representative of the lay public, nominated by both SIIM and ARRT. Once these board members are appointed, their duty is to act in the best interests of ABII, not SIIM, ARRT, or any other organization. This leadership structure complies with the guidelines of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and is similar to the structure of many other certifying boards.

*Myth 9: The CIIP certification process was established to make money for SIIM and ARRT.*

There is no financial relationship between ABII and SIIM or ARRT. ABII fees were set to make the certification process financially self-sustaining. The reality is that rigorous certification programs generally are not profitable. In fact, SIIM and ARRT provide indirect support to the ABII in a variety of ways.

*Myth 10: The first candidates who took the CIIP exam were “stressed out.”*

Of course, there is some unavoidable stress in taking a test. But on the contrary, the comments received from those taking the first two certification exams were overwhelmingly positive.

If you have any questions about the certification process, or encounter other myths that need to be debunked, please let me know, or contact the ABII directly. I hope you will consider seeking CIIP certification; the process benefits us all!